

TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP**JOIN A SERVE TEAM****NEW HERE?****CONNECTION CARD****STAY UP TO DATE****SUBSCRIBE TO DIGITAL BULLETIN****Message Series: Generational Legacy****Message Title: Love the Lord First****Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4-6**

When you hear the word legacy, what comes to mind? Many people think of money, property, or accomplishments. However, legacy is much more than what you leave behind for people. It's what you leave in people. Legacy is the story of your life that continues long after you're gone. Your legacy will outlive you, regardless of what you leave behind.

In the midst of the literal demolition of our facility's basement, God has also been revealing something foundational about who we are as a church. What's been uncovered is a value that is foundational to Harvest Springs. We're calling this value Generational Legacy, which refers to the value of passing faith from one generation to the next. Our prayer is that this Jesus centered community we're building here at Harvest Springs will last, not just for us, but for our children, and their children, and those who come after them.

The faith we practice was passed down to us through generations. Faithful people taught others and their children to be faithful, who in turn passed their trust in God to each subsequent generation. We have inherited a legacy of faith. Will we pass this legacy of faith on to others? Throughout the Scriptures, God commanded his people to pass on their faith to future generations. One of those passages is known as the Shema.

What is the Shema?

- Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is a foundational passage of scripture. This passage is often referred to as the Shema from the first Hebrew word of verse 4: שְׁמָע (shema), an imperative verb that speaks of God's expectation of Israel to be a people not only to hear his voice but to respond to it with obedience.
- In the context of Deuteronomy, Moses is speaking to the next generation after the exodus from Egypt at the edge of the Promised Land. This generation was born and grew up in the wilderness. Like every generation, there were new possibilities and new challenges. Moses received words from God to the people, reminding them of their covenant commitment to the Lord.
- For the Jewish people, the Shema was the central confession of faith. It declared the uniqueness of God—there is no other—and called God's people to total devotion. It functioned almost like Israel's "pledge of allegiance" to the one true God.
- By the first century, the Shema had become a daily prayer. Faithful Jews recited it every morning and evening (based on Deut. 6:7: "when you lie down and when you get up").
- When Jesus was asked in Mark 12:28–30, "What is the greatest commandment?" He quoted the Shema. For Jesus and for his Jewish audience, the Shema summed up the heart of God's covenant: exclusive loyalty and wholehearted love for the Lord.

1. The Lord Alone is First

- Literally, Deuteronomy 6:4 says, "Yahweh, Adonai, Yahweh is one." The idea of one is a reference to the exclusivity of Israel's commitment to the Lord.
- In other words, the Lord is the first and only god the Israelites were to obey and worship.
- In a world full of competing gods and idols, Israel was called to remember that the Lord alone is the only God.
- The legacy of faith begins with clarity and a sense of priority. *Who is our God?* Our children and others must see that we serve the living God, not success, not sports, not comfort.

2. Love the Lord with All

- Deuteronomy 6:5 instructs us on how to keep the Lord as our first and only priority through our love for him. This verse provides parts of us that are called to love the Lord.
- Heart (*Lev*)
 - In Hebrew, the *heart* was not just emotions, as we think today. It was the center of a person's inner life, including thinking, feeling, and willing.
 - The Hebrews did not separate "mind" from "heart." The heart (*lev*) was where decisions were made, thoughts were processed, emotions arose, and desires were shaped.
 - To love God with your *heart* means to set your mind's attention and your will's affection on him.
- Soul (*Nephesh*)
 - *Nephesh* literally means "throat" or "breath," but came to mean the whole living being or "life itself." When God created humanity from the ground, humanity became a *nephesh*, a living being, when God breathed life into the first human.
 - It's not a "disembodied soul" (as in Greek thought), but the entire person as a living, breathing creature.
 - To love God with your *soul* means to love him with your whole life, your very existence, your entire being.
- Strength (*Me'od*)
 - This is a tricky one because *me'od* isn't normally translated as "strength." It literally means "very" or "muchness."
 - In the Shema, it conveys loving God with all your resources, capacities, and "muchness" — everything you've got.
 - It includes physical strength, as well as wealth, talents, influence, time, and opportunities.
- The Shema is a poetic way of saying love the Lord with your inner life (heart), with your whole self (soul), and with everything you have (strength). In other words, love the Lord with all of you, in every way possible.

3. Let These Words Be On Your Heart

- Literally, Deuteronomy 6:6 says, "Let these words which I say to you be on your hearts."
- Before you teach anyone else, the Lord says, "These commandments are to be on your hearts."
- You can't pass on what you don't possess. Discipleship and a legacy of faith emerge from your overflow. Others and your children soak up what's already real in you.

Psalms 78:1-8 instructs Israel and us to teach the next generation, to pass on the legacy of faith. It also warns us about our hearts becoming stubborn and unbelieving.

How can you love God with all of you, in every way possible? Begin by memorizing and repeating the Shema.